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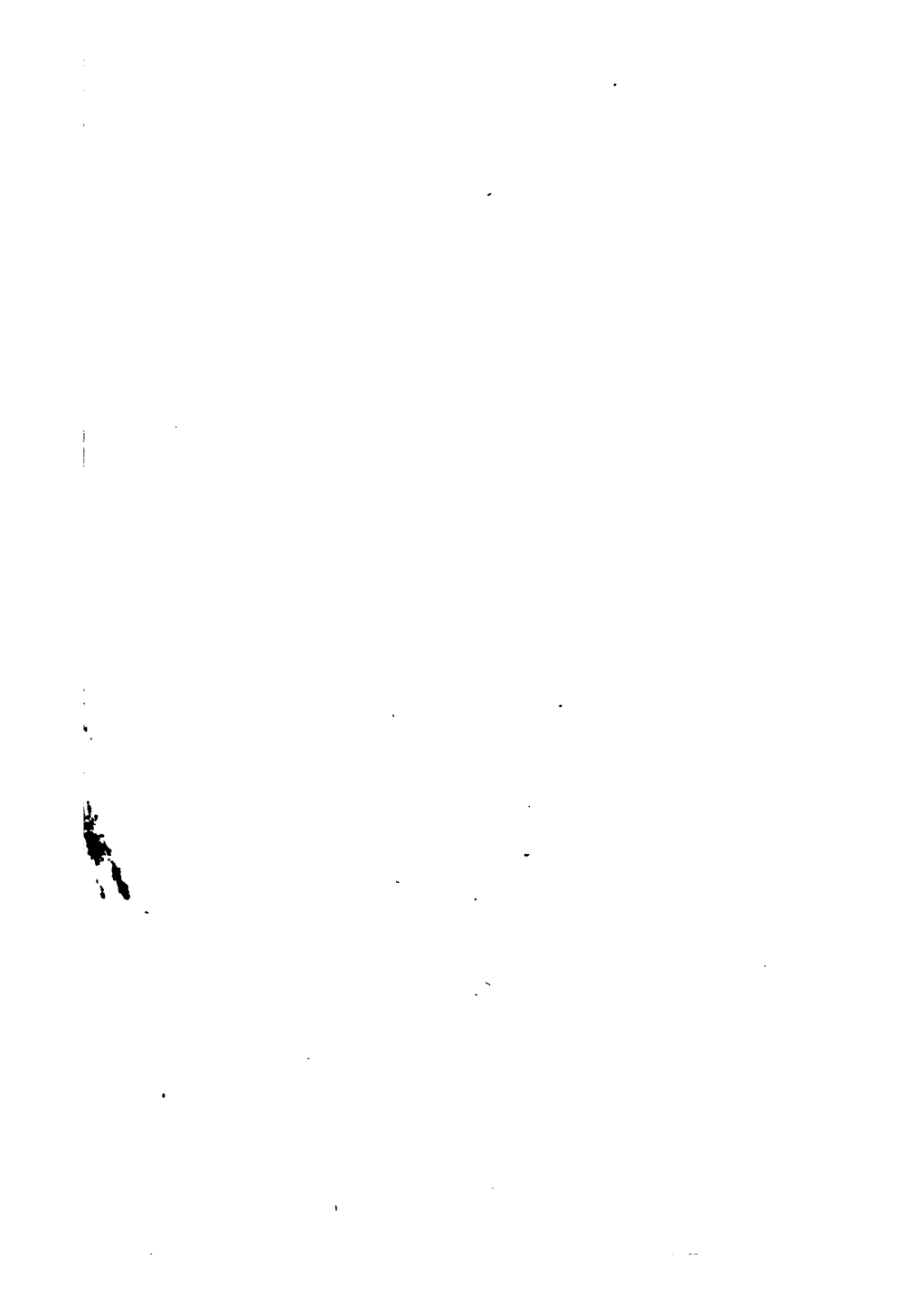
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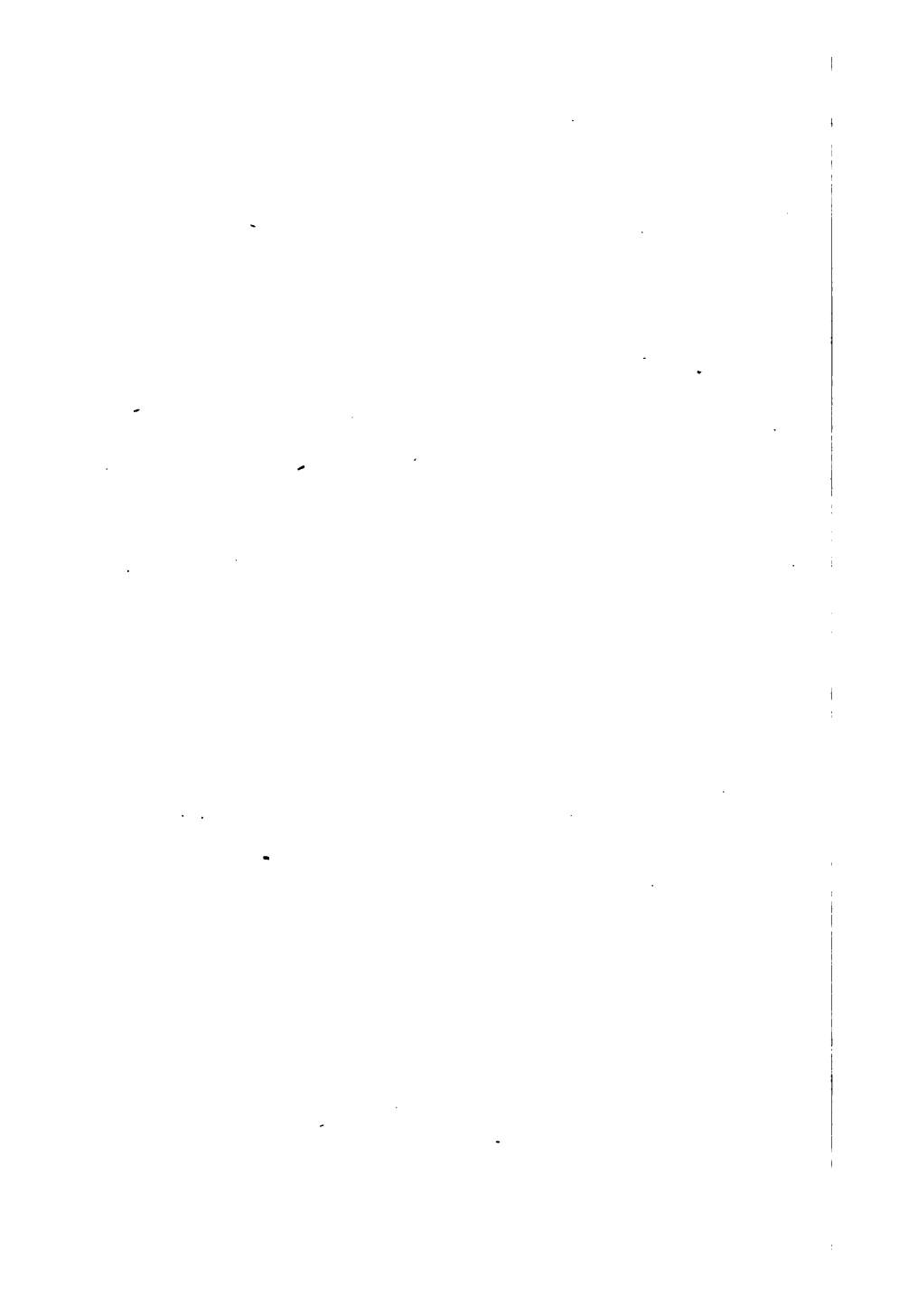
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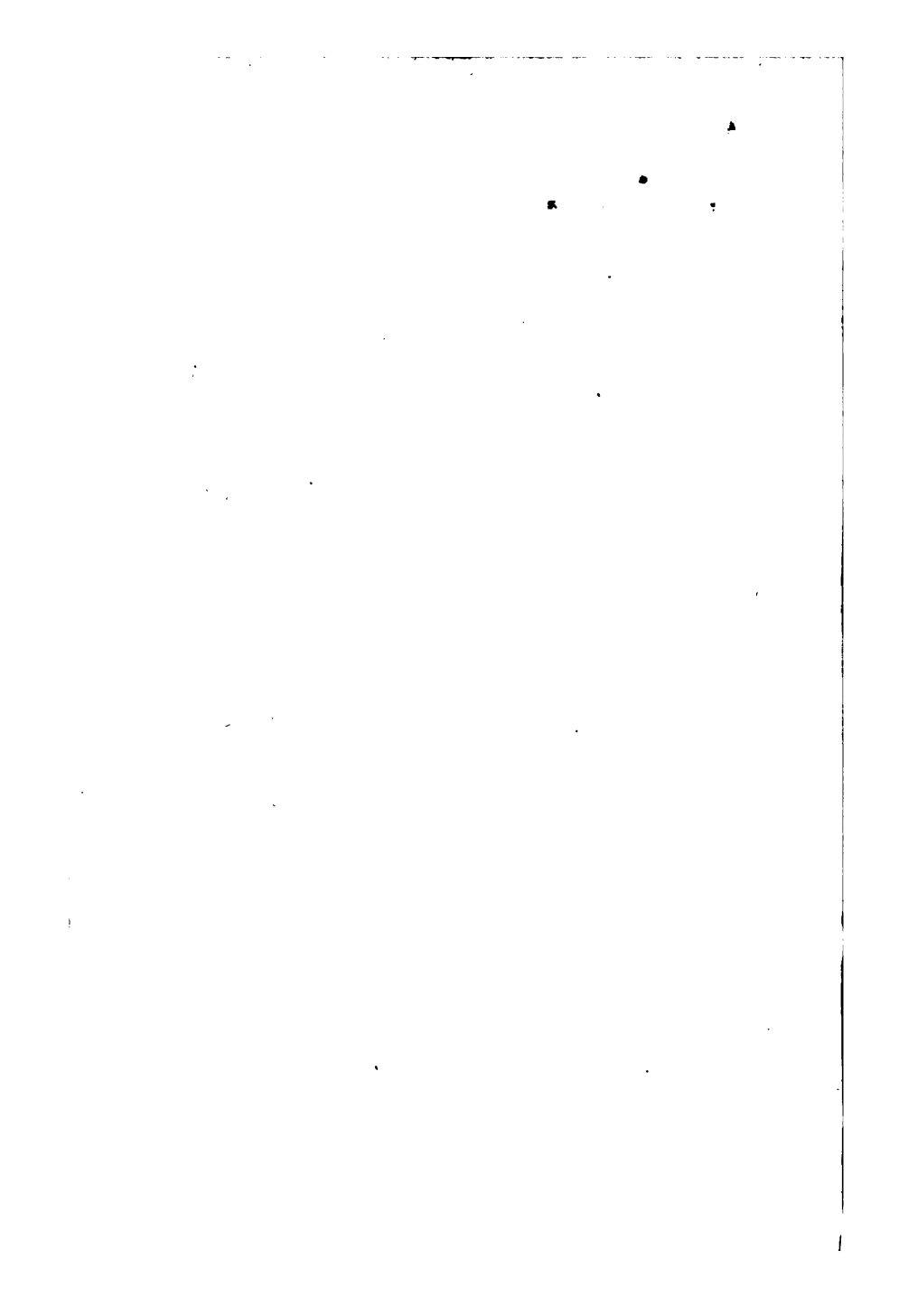








FUTURE LIFE OF THE GOOD.



THE

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FUTURE LIFE OF THE GOOD.

'I felt that, however long to me
The slumber of the grave might be,
I should know him again, 'mid the countless throng
Who shall bear their part in the Seraphim's song.'

BOSTON,

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P R E F A C E.

The heart that hath wept beside the grave of the departed loved-ones, naturally turns with a stronger faith, and a more earnest attention to the *home* which they have found, and to the employments on which they have entered. Revelation gives us no minute description of the soul's first entrance upon these untried scenes; neither does it leave us in utter darkness. It teaches us that a continual progress and unending enjoyment awaits those who have faithfully accomplished their probation here. Faith fills the void, and good men of all ages have triumphed in the prospect of leaving the weaknesses of humanity, to assume the garb of immortality.

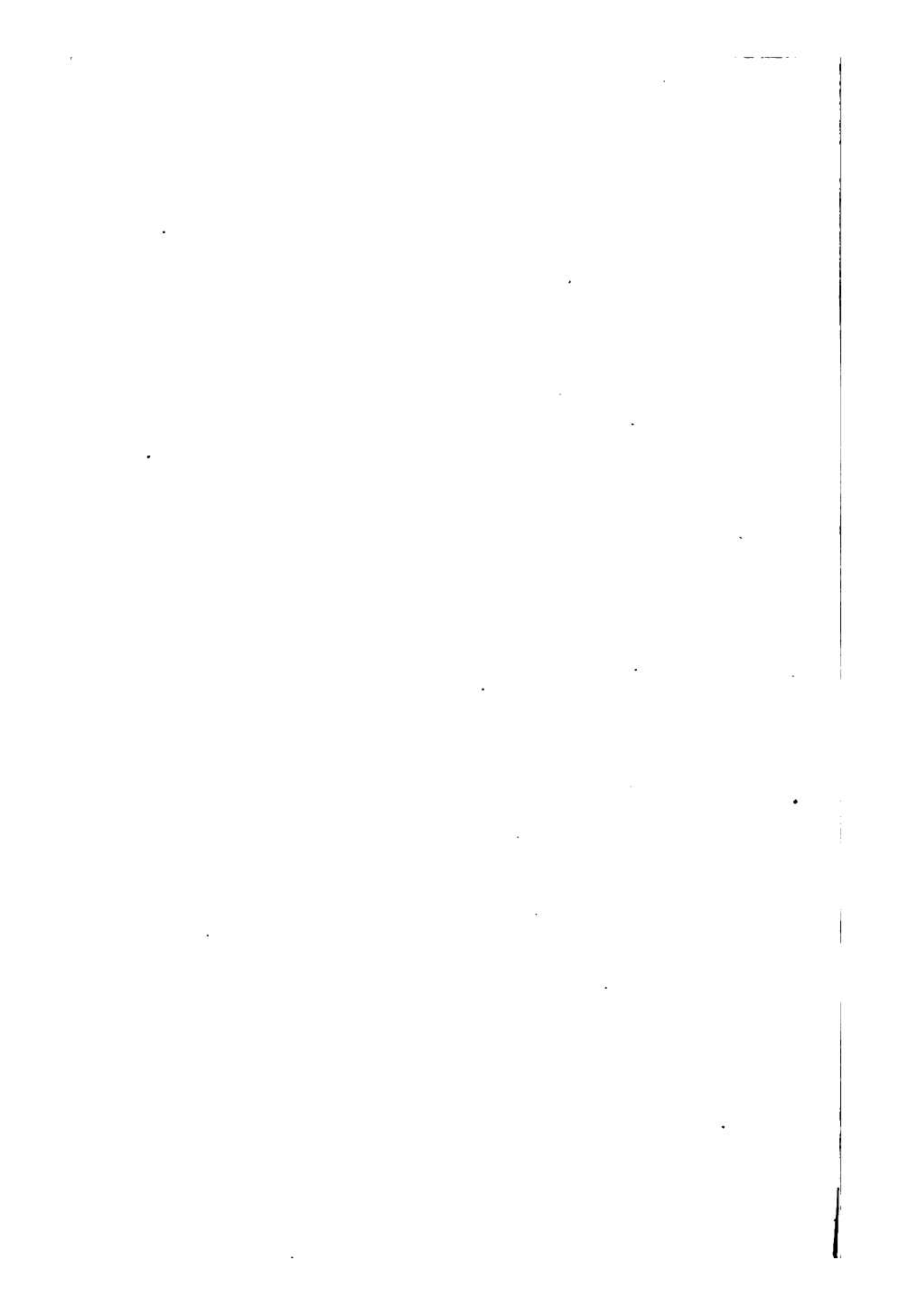
It is believed that this book contains many elevated thoughts and just conceptions of the 'Future Life of

the Good.' It is suited to correct false ideas of the nature of true happiness, to pour the refreshing balm of consolation into the heart-stricken, to animate us to progress here, that we may be the better fitted to continue it hereafter. It consists of the conceptions which the pure and virtuous have formed here—the foretastes of heaven which have been awakened on earth ; and if it have the happy effect of leading the sorrowful or happy to a more perfect conception of the future life, its whole aim will have been accomplished.

Boston, September, 1839.

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FUTURE LIFE OF THE GOOD.

REUNION OF FRIENDS.

When we ask for Scriptural evidence of the reunion of friends in a future state, are we not answered by every passage from Scripture which speaks of that state as a social one?—and the fact is, that it is spoken of there in no other way. Whether the mention is incidental, or direct, it constantly presents heaven to our thoughts as a place or state in which the righteous shall meet together, not exist separately. If we listen to Jesus, we hear him declare, that where he is his disciples shall be also.—If we turn to the Epistles, Paul tells us, that when Christ, our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory ; and

the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews points with rapture to the "general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven." If we pass over to that grand vision which concludes the books of the New Testament, we hear in heaven "as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, and the voice of harpers harping with their harps." The blessed in heaven are always represented as being in society, as being with their brethren, with angels, with their Savior, and with their God.

Now hardly any thing can seem to be plainer, than that, as heaven is a social and not a solitary state, they who live together there must know each other; and that they who knew each other here must know each other there. And it is one of the most reasonable of all propositions, that if we carry any affections with us into the future state, they will fly first of all to salute those, who in this state

were their cherished objects. When a mother joins the heavenly company of the redeemed, will she not, if she retains any thing of her former self and nature, if she has not lost her identity and the consciousness of it, will she not ask for "the babe she lost in infancy?" If she is herself, she will ask for it. If God is good, she will find it, know it, embrace it. How she will find it, by what marks know it, and with what exercises renew her love, must be left for immortality to reveal; but the rest, the simple fact of recognition is plain,—so plain that we are disposed to think that the reason why so little is said in the Scriptures of future recognition, is, that it was considered as naturally implied and involved in the fact of a future social state. On such a subject, intimation is equivalent to distinct declaration, and is sometimes even more forcible. Let us see if there are not such intimations of future recognition to be found in the Scriptures, as amount to a declaration of the fact,

because they cannot be fully explained except on a supposition of the fact.

Recognition is intimated by exhortations to comfort on the loss of friends. The burthen of our sorrow in the loss of those whom we love, is, that we have lost their society, which was the very dearest thing on earth to us; the most applicable consolation which can be offered to alleviate this burthen, is, that their society is not lost to us for ever, that we shall enjoy it once more, that we shall meet again. Now, what says St. Paul, in his epistle to the Thessalonians. "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Beautiful words of assurance and comfort! How soothingly they fall on the wounds of the heart! Well counsels the Apostle soon after, "Wherefore comfort one another with these

words." And what makes them so peculiarly comforting? Not simply the assurance of restoration to life, a waking up of those who have fallen asleep, but the idea of collection, association, reunion, which the language supposes, and which is so pertinent to the case of separation to which they are addressed. As Jesus rose from the dead, even so God will awaken and bring *with* him, those who slept in him; "and so," says the Apostle, "shall we ever be with the Lord." We, who have been parted, shall again be united, and Christ shall be our head, and we shall part no more. This is consolation; consolation which exactly meets the case of distress.

To illustrate this by a comparison, let us suppose it to be necessary that a whole family, united by the tenderest mutual affection, should remove from the land where they had been brought up together, to another land, which is distant indeed, but far better; and to be equally necessary that they should re-

move, not all together but one by one, and that there should be an interval of a considerable space of time between each removal. When one member of this family departed for the place of his destination, what would be the most appropriate consolation which could be offered to those who remained behind? Would they be fully comforted by being told, that he who had just gone away, had gone to a country, which enjoyed a more delightful climate than that which he had left; where he would live in health and at ease, and that they themselves would in due season be called to the same country, though to be sure they would live in different parts of it, and not be allowed to see each other any more? Would they be satisfied with this account of their dispersion, though it were to take place in "a land which is the joy of all lands?" It would be imperfect consolation compared with the assurance that in that far, happy land they were to be reunited, after the term of their

temporary separation, and renew the intercourse, which in a bleak clime and a barren country had constituted their joy and their wealth. That would be consolation; and such a reunion would be implied, and would naturally be considered as implied, if they were told by a sympathizing friend not to sorrow for their loss as the hopeless sorrow, but to look forward to the land where their relative had gone, and to which they were to be taken themselves.

Other passages, besides the one above adduced, might be quoted, containing intimations to the same purpose. They are not direct declarations of the fact of recognition, but we cannot read them without supposing that the fact was in the writer's mind; and that indeed he had no other thought on the subject, but that he should certainly know, after the resurrection, those whom he had known before.

The Scriptural evidence in favor of future reunion and recognition, with which the

deductions of probability, the inferences of reason, and the dictates of the affections well coincide, amounts to this. Heaven is a social state. If we and our friends are found worthy of an entrance into that state, we shall form a part of its society, and consequently remember and know each other. They who were near to us here, if they are also near unto God, will be near to us there ; and, other things being equal, they will be nearer to us than others, simply because we have known them more and longer, and loved them better, than others, and have associations with them so interwoven with our earthly or former life, that they can scarcely be destroyed or disturbed except with our consciousness and memory.

Nor can we see that the restoration of friends to each other's society in a future state, is inconsistent with that universal and heavenly love which will animate the bosoms of all the blessed. Particular affection for those with whom we have been particularly connect-

ed, is not inconsistent with a kind and generous affection for many friends, for all the good from all ages and all countries of the world, to whom the better country will be the great and final meeting-place. The ground of this particular affection is, the relation which individuals have held toward each other in this life ; and this life, though short in duration, and poor and unimportant when compared with the next, is yet the introduction to the next, the scene of probation for the next, the life in which our affections and virtues have been formed and educated, and have acquired their private associations ; and it is therefore not to be supposed that all this is to be made a blank hereafter, as if it had never been. “ And when we reflect,” says Bishop Mant, “ on the pleasure which is imparted to our minds by being admitted, after long separation, to the society of those whom we have known and loved from early years, but from whom we have been constrained to endure a temporary

separation ; and on the special delight which we experience from renewing, in communion with them, old but dormant affections, retracing in conversation the events of scenes gone by, and dwelling upon affairs of mutual personal interest ; a delight which the formation of no new acquaintance, however virtuous, however intelligent, however amiable, is for the most part found capable of conferring ; it may be thought probable, that among their future associates, considered as constituents of the happiness of the blessed, those whom they have formerly known and loved and cherished, will be comprehended ; and that the company of the spirits of other just men made perfect, will not preclude a readmission to the fellowship of their former connexions and friends.” In short, let it only be premised that friends are worthy of each other’s love in heaven, and it is no more than rational to suppose, that they will derive a peculiar satisfaction in each other’s society there, from the circumstances

with which Providence had bound them together during their sojourn on earth.

But here an objection has been made, founded on the question of worthiness. If some with whom the good have been connected here below, should, from their unworthiness, be excluded from the delights and the society of heaven, the good, it has been said, will, on the supposition of their knowing this, suffer pain, and pain cannot be suffered in heaven.

A few considerations may remove this objection. In the first place, though pain will not be suffered in heaven, there is no reason to believe that a certain degree of regret may not, and that this regret will be so consonant with our sense of justice, that happiness will not thereby be essentially disturbed. Heaven is represented as a place where there will be "no more pain." This is in order to give an idea of its exemption from the accidents and deaths, the sorrows and alarms, to which we are subject here. But such a representa-

tion of future bliss, by no means excludes the idea of imperfection. And if the soul is to make progress hereafter, and rise from glory to glory, and from one step of happiness to another, the idea of imperfection must be necessarily attached to such a state, because a state of improvement must needs be a state of imperfection. God himself is the only and absolutely perfect. If we are continually, advancing nearer to him, we may be satisfied, grateful, and happy, whether on earth or in heaven, and infinitely more happy, doubtless, in heaven than on earth, on account of the many glorious circumstances which will attend our great change. But if we remember our former selves, we must remember our former sins of transgression and omission, and this remembrance will produce regret, and this regret, without preventing our enjoyment of heaven's felicities, will, together with other causes, maintain within us a constant humility, a virtue which will not lose its lustre and val-

ue amidst the brightest glories of the New Jerusalem. If, therefore, we may remember with regret our own past offences, without losing the privilege of heavenly happiness, we may likewise view with regret the banishment of some of those with whom we were connected on earth by the ties of nature or habit, and yet be so enlightened with regard to the justice and beneficial ends of that banishment, as not to experience therefrom any suffering which would embitter or be inconsistent with celestial blessedness.

Secondly, it must be considered, that vile conduct does alienate brother from brother, and impair affection here on earth. May it not, therefore, be presumed that the good will not take with them into a future state any strong affection, or any other than compassion, for those whose vices have estranged affection, and weakened, if not broken, the bonds of nature and of love. "And it may be," again

observes Bishop Mant, "since God's rational creatures are dear to him according to their moral excellence, and since the blessed in the future state will be 'like God;' it may be, that their *affection* towards those, who, in their earthly relation, were naturally the objects of it, will be regulated by this likeness to the Divine nature; and that, whilst it will be ratified, confirmed, and strengthened with respect to such as partake of their Father's blessings, and are objects of his love, it will be annihilated with respect to those who are banished from his presence, and pronounced aliens from his affectionate regard." In one sense, God loves and must for ever love all his creatures,—but the love which he bears toward those who have remembered and kept his commandments, must be of a different character from that which he bears toward those who have forgotten and disobeyed him. And so in a similar manner will the love which the beatified feel for those with whom

they walk in heaven as they have walked on earth, be different from the love which they feel for those who wandered from them on earth and meet them not in heaven. God's love for the latter demands their punishment, and the love of his servants toward them will not question its infliction. They will bow before the Supreme Wisdom and Goodness. They cannot regard as their friends those who are not the friends of God. And in this view, it may be said, that the righteous in the future world will have all their friends with them. They who are not with them cannot be their friends.

And yet memory will be faithful, and love may plead. And here we come to a consideration which may obviate the difficulty advanced better than any other, and on which better than on any other we like to dwell. Though we fully believe that the wicked will be punished hereafter, and will not undertake to deny that they may not retain their wicked

dispositions, and thus bring on themselves perpetual punishment, we do not believe that their wickedness or their punishment is necessarily and inevitably eternal. We believe that God's punishments hereafter, as his chastisements here, are designed to be corrective, and that on many, if not on all, they will have a correcting, reforming, and consequently restoring influence. We also believe, according to Apostolic teaching, that "charity never faileth," no, not in heaven. And so we believe that it may extend its pitying and saving regards to those who most need them, to those who have made themselves outcasts from the heavenly country, the city of our God. In what errand, in what duty can the blessed be more celestially employed, than in bringing back, or endeavoring to bring back, into the family of the redeemed, those erring and lost ones, to whom nature had formerly bound and endeared them? May it not be one of the employments, one of the most glorious employ-

ments and crowning pleasures, of those who have been saved themselves, to be made instrumental in restoring others, who once were dear, to that peace of spirit which they have madly destroyed, to that heaven which they have justly forfeited? O who that has been found worthy to be a partaker "of the inheritance of the saints in light," would hesitate to forego for a time, and time after time, the society and the joys of his blissful abode, that he might work upon the heart of one whom he had numbered among his family on earth, and place him once more in the same mansion with himself? Who would not pray before the mercy-seat to be sent on such a mission of mercy? "Let me go," he might say, "let me go to the exile, and persuade him to return. He has suffered long. Long has he been wailing in outer darkness. Remorse must have visited his burning heart. Solitude and anguish must have broken down his perverseness. He was not always perverse and

wicked. Through the long vista of ages I can see him as he once was. He once was a happy child, an innocent child, affectionate and ingenuous, and pure as the light which beamed from his eyes or played on his clustering hair. I have held him in my arms. I have watched his smiles, and dried his tears. I loved him once. O that I might cherish him again! that I might bear to him thy forgiveness! that I might bring him back to happiness, to heaven, and to Thee!" Would not the Universal Father grant the prayer? Can it be proved to us, that the saints and angels are not and will not be occupied in fulfilling his restoring purposes? Are we told, that between the saved and the lost there is a great gulf fixed, so that they who would pass and re-pass cannot do so? We will not insist that this argument is drawn from merely the illustrative part of a parable, which is not intended to convey either doctrine or fact; but will grant, that there must needs be a profound

separation between the happy and the wretched, the acquitted and the condemned, in the future state ; a separation which neither party can pass over at will. And yet, by the permission of the Almighty, and on messages of his own grace and compassion, that gulf may be passed ; and what gulf can there be too wide for the wings of love, too deep or broad for the passage of charity ?

The considerations which have been mentioned, are abundantly sufficient, to our mind, to obviate the difficulty which they have been brought forward to answer. But if they were less convincing, if the difficulty remained in its full force, yet the doctrine of future recognition would not be disproved. No objection drawn from a probable state of painful feeling for the wicked, could overthrow the fact that heaven is a social condition of being, on which fact the doctrine of the mutual recognition of friends in heaven still would rest unmoved. This fact should be sufficient to content and

console us. Heaven is a social state, a city, a kingdom, a church, in which there is a great assembly, an innumerable company, and in which the innocent and good, the servants of the King Eternal, the spiritual and true worshippers of the Father, will meet together, and know each other, and never be separated any more. There the parent will see the child, improved by heavenly culture, and listen to the voice, now made more musical, which in days gone by was the sweetest music he ever heard. There the child will find the parent, and hear from him those words of love and wisdom which were early lost to him on earth. There brother and sister will meet again, and exchange again that confidence and sympathy which passed between them and united them here. There the widowed wife will meet the husband, and the husband the wife; and though they will be as the angels, where there is no marrying nor giving in marriage, the ties and affections of earth will not be forgotten, and in spirit they twain will be one.

Years soon finish their revolutions. A few more incidents, and the scene of mortal life is closed. Time hastens to restore that which we thought it was too hasty in demanding. Death promptly repairs as well as destroys, rejoins as well as divides, is cruel and kind in quick succession. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait," said the patient man, "till my change come." The last change cannot be long in coming to any. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait," is the language of every pious spirit, "till my change come." All the days are but few. I will wait, and hope, and cheerfully trust, till they are gone. The distance can be but small which keeps me from those whom I have loved, and yet love, and, in the presence of God and my Redeemer, and in the light of heaven, shall continue to love for ever.

THE LAND OF THE BLEST.

‘ Dear father, I ask for my mother in vain,
Has she sought some far country, her health to regain ?
Has she left our cold climate of frost and of snow,
For some warm, sunny land, where the soft breezes
blow ? ’

‘ Yes, yes, gentle boy, thy loved mother has gone
To a climate where sorrow and pain are unknown ;
Her spirit is strengthened, her frame is at rest,
There is health, there is peace, in the Land of the
Blest ! ’

‘ Is that Land, my dear father, more lovely than ours,
Are the rivers more clear, and more blooming the
flowers ?

Does Summer shine over it all the year long ?
Is it cheered by the glad sound of music and song ? ’
‘ Yes, the flowers are despoiled not by winter or night,
The well-springs of life are exhaustless and bright,

And by sweet voices sweet hymns are address
To the Lord, who reigns over the Land of the Blest !'

' Yet that land to my mother will lonely appear ;
She shrunk from the glance of a stranger, while here ;
From her foreign companions I know she will flee,
And sigh, dearest father, for you and for me.'

' My darling, thy mother delighteth to gaze
On the long-severed friends of her earliest days ;
Her parents have there found a mansion of rest,
And they welcome their child to the Land of the Blest.'

' How I long to partake of such meetings of bliss !
That land must be surely more happy than this ;
On you, my kind father, the journey depends,
Let us go to my mother, her kindred and friends.'

' Not on me, love ; I trust I may reach that bright
clime,

But in patience I stay, till the Lord's chosen time,
And must strive, while awaiting his gracious behest,
To guide thy young steps to the Land of the Blest.

' Thou must toil through a world full of danger, my
boy ;

Thy peace it may blight and thy virtue destroy ;

Nor wilt thou, alas ! be withheld from its snares
By a mother's kind counsels; a mother's fond prayers.
Yet fear not ; the God whose direction we crave,
Is mighty to strengthen, to shield, and to save,
And His hand may yet lead thee, a glorified guest,
To the home of thy mother, the Land of the Blest.'

THY WILL BE DONE.

Thy will be done—I will not fear
The fate provided by thy love ;
Though clouds and darkness shroud me here,
I know that all is bright above.

The stars of heaven are shining on,
Though these frail eyes are dim with tears ;
The hopes of earth indeed are gone,
But are not ours the immortal years ?

Father ! forgive the heart that clings
Thus trembling to the things of time ;
And bid my soul, on angel wings,
Ascend into a purer clime !

RECOGNITION.

How shall we know them—the holy dead,
Whom we left alone in their narrow bed ?
What if remembrance have power to trace
Minutest lines of each buried face ;
What if the form we so fondly love,
With us in dreams of affection move ?
We had looked our last on a marble brow,
We brook not to think it altered now ;
But great and total the change must be
Ere it put off the garb of mortality.

How shall we know *him*—the one who died
Like a shock of corn in autumn pride ;
Her, whom we knew by her pallid cheek,
By sickness blighted, by grief made weak ?
Not by the gleam of their silver hair,
Not by the traces of time and care ;
But by the feelings, more deeply shrined,
The feelings that dwell in the changeless mind ;
By a child-like love—the love that we felt
In earthly homes, where our parents dwelt.

How shall we know them, who passed away
In all the freshness of early day ;
Those whom we cherished in later years,
From whom we parted with bitter tears ?
Not by the beauty which marked them then ;
O were it such it must fade again :
But by a gladness which round them plays
Like a joy revived from our olden days ;
By the holy joys our spirits knew,
Which a better world shall again renew.

How shall we know them,—the infant race ;
How will the mother her loved one trace ?
Not by the glance of his sunny eye,
'T was but a gleam o'er mortality ;
Not by his look when he sunk to rest,
A closing flower on her throbbing breast ;
But by a feeling like that which burned
When her heart o'er the guileless stranger yearned ;
By a thrill like that, which, when first he smiled,
Came o'er her soul, will she know her child.

REUNION IN HEAVEN.

If death my friend and me divide,
Thou dost not, Lord, my sorrow chide,
Or frown my tears to see :
Restrained from passionate excess,
Thou bidst me mourn in calm distress,
For them that rest in thee.

I feel a strong immortal hope,
Which bears my mournful spirit up,
Beneath its mountain-load ;
Redeemed from death, and grief, and pain,
I soon shall find my friend again,
Within the arms of God.

Pass a few fleeting moments more,
And death the blessing shall restore
Which death hath snatched away ;
For me thou wilt the summons send,
And give me back my parted friend,
In that eternal day.

CONTEMPLATION OF IMMORTALITY.

We are, in a little time, to experience a change of our present mode of being; and this change may be regarded with very different views and feelings. It is not the gradual decay of the body, nor the pains of disease, nor the feeble struggles of nature in the grasp of death, nor the mingling of dust with dust, nor the subsequent dissolution of our animal frame, nor any such accidents of mortality, which ought to arrest and fix our attention in the contemplation of this event. It is not the leaving of this life which is its essential characteristic; it is the entering upon another. Considered merely as the termination of the present life, it is comparatively an event of little importance. Much as it is commonly dreaded, men expose themselves to the hazard

of it from motives the most inconsiderable. It occurs in our neighborhood, and scarcely casts a transient shade over the current of our thoughts. We read the daily records of mortality with as little emotion, as we do any other, the idlest news, to which we may next turn our eyes. But death, when viewed under that aspect in which it is regarded by the Christian and the philosopher as an object of contemplation, assumes a very different character. We then perceive that the most common and unnoticed of all events is the most solemn, the most mysterious, and the most interesting. We have been here but a little time, and some of our number are continually taken from us. Where are they now? Where now are some whom we used to meet so often in the common intercourse of life; with whose faces we were so familiar? Where now are some whom we loved with such strong and intimate affection; in every thing occurring to whom, we lately felt so deep and

personal an interest? Through what scenes are they now passing? What events have occurred to them since our separation? What secrets would they have to disclose to us, if we could be permitted for a little time to hold that intercourse with them, which the imagination regards with so much awe and curiosity? Why is the thin veil that separates us from eternity, behind which some one or another of us is continually passing, never rent for a moment to discover to us what is beyond?

But we shall soon join those who have gone before us; and the secrets of eternity will soon be no secrets to us. Christianity has already taught us plainly and directly every thing which it is most important for us to know. Our happiness in that state, on which we are to enter after death, depends upon the characters that we may form in the present. There is, as it respects all moral beings, an unalterable relation, which will sooner or later

make itself felt, between virtue and happiness, and between guilt and misery. The present life is a state of discipline and preparation for that which is to succeed; and it is in our power by doing our duty here,—that is, by doing what in the common course of things will best promote our present happiness,—to attain hereafter to a state of felicity such as is never known in this world. These are fundamental truths of our religion; and they afford all the motives necessary to the highest attainments in moral excellence. But believing these truths, believing that this life is a state of discipline and preparation for that which is to come, we may, perhaps, infer something more definite and particular respecting the future life than what has yet been stated. There must be a correspondence between the preparation and that for which we are prepared, an adaptation of the discipline to the state which is to follow it. The character, which we are placed here to acquire, must

be such as will enable us to perform the duties, and to partake the enjoyments of that life which is to come. The habits which we are here to form, must be such as will hereafter be exercised. The dispositions and affections, which we are here to cultivate, must be such as will hereafter meet with corresponding objects. Reasoning in this manner, we may come to some conclusions respecting the future state of the good, on which, I think, we may rely, and which are neither uninteresting, nor unimportant. The more definite are our notions respecting the happiness of the future life, the more will it interest our imagination and feelings, and the stronger sense shall we have of its reality. The expectation of some good, of which we form no conception, may influence the understanding, but has no power over the affections. In proportion, likewise, as we form more correct notions respecting that blessedness to which we may attain, so shall we perceive more clearly the necessity of

preparing ourselves for its enjoyment, and understand better the sort of preparation which is necessary. Let us consider then what revelation and reason teach us concerning the future state of the good.

I. The future life of good men will be a life of social enjoyment and social duties. We are here educated to be social beings, and are taught to find much of our happiness in a mutual interchange of good affections and kind offices. Nature has connected us together by a thousand sympathies, interests, and dependencies, and it is only our vices and imperfections, which loosen these bonds and repel us from each other. In that future life, should we attain to it, we shall feel within ourselves and in those around us, the full influence of those virtues which draw man near to man. We shall be united again, and forever, to those friends whose memory is so dear to us; and we shall find them, and shall be ourselves, free from the imperfections of humanity; for "*they*

that are accounted worthy to inherit that world shall be as the angels." In that world, we may have intercourse with excellent men of all ages and nations; with all who have triumphed, and all who have suffered, in the cause of God and of mankind; with those who have acquired the wreath of merited glory, and those who have attained the crown of martyrdom; with the Apostles of our faith;—and even with him, to whose ministry we are indebted for all these ennobling expectations; and who gave in his own character an example of the purity and perfection of that state to which we are aspiring. It was a prospect similar to this, which the first orator, and one of the first and best men whom Rome ever produced, contemplated with so much enthusiasm;—speaking (in the person of the elder Cato) of "that glorious day, when he should escape from the turbulence and pollution of this earth, and be admitted to the divine assembly and council of those, whom he had known, and loved, and

reverenced here, and of those great men of whom he had heard, or read, or of whom he himself had written." The doubtful hope which philosophy could afford, had power thus to animate a high and generous mind ; and we enjoy the strong assurance which Christianity inspires. If we could but remove from this world the many evils which man inflicts upon man ; if prudence and kindness were mingled in all our intercourse with each other ; if the glow, and generosity, and unlimited confidence of friendship, were as common as they now are rare ; if that harmony were always breathing around us, which is produced by the perfect concord of minds in their sympathies and affections, we may conceive what a scene of happiness even this world, with all its remaining evils, would present. When called upon to leave it, we might be excused if we were willing to linger upon the threshold. It is not now from such a scene that death takes us away ; but it is to such a scene that it has power to introduce us.

II. But the future life of the good, we may further believe, will be a life of employment, and of invigorating and successful exertion. In this world, we are taught to find that laudable occupation is happiness, and that inaction is misery. It is our duty and our business here to form habits of active virtue ; and if these habits be here formed, we need not fear that they will be left hereafter without opportunities for their exercise. We shall be employed as ministers of God in conferring benefits upon his creatures. There will be works of mercy and of love apportioned to us, that we may have the pleasure of doing good. The virtues from which so much is required in their present imperfect state, will not be suffered to remain unemployed, as they approach nearer to perfection. We shall hear the voice which will say to us, "*Well done, good and faithful servant ; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee lord over many things.*" While our good habits are thus con-

stantly exercised, and constantly acquiring strength and purity; they will be accompanied with far more confidence in ourselves, with far more pleasure in contemplating the past, and with far more security and delight in looking forward to the future, than are consistent with the imperfection of our best attainments in this world. Our sensibility to moral excellence will not then be, what it now often is, a source of shame and regret, on account of our deficiencies, our follies, and our sins; for we shall then feel less reluctance at comparing what we are with what we ought to be. Our progress in moral improvement will be no more interrupted; the mind will be no more harassed and thrown into disorder, by the irruption of the viler passions. The warfare will have been accomplished. The toil and the agony will be past.

III. But as our virtues will find constant occupation, so our intellectual faculties will have their proper exercise. We shall compre-

hend truths which now elude the grasp of our minds, and escape the cognizance of our senses. We shall view with other powers the vast machinery of nature, and explore her mechanism, and enter her laboratories, and examine her processes, and traverse the unbounded extent of her works ; and contemplate in exhaustless succession, new forms of life, and new modes of existence, and new displays of eternal wisdom and benevolence. There will be no failure or decay of the faculties. There will be no painful labor which cannot attain its object, and leaves behind it only a bitter and mortifying sense of inability. The mind will be no more impeded and enthralled by the weakness and diseases of the body ; but invigorated in all its powers, and furnished with new faculties, will direct its steady and unwearied flight through regions of knowledge unexplored and unimagined.

IV. But while happiness is thus flowing in upon us from such various sources, we shall, at the same time, recognize the Author of all the good which we enjoy or behold, with deep-felt and delightful sentiments of gratitude, love, and veneration. Devotion is the child of knowledge and of virtue. The strength and purity of this sentiment are proportioned to our moral sensibility, to the justness of our conceptions respecting the character, the works, and the moral government of God, and to the sincerity and faithfulness of our endeavors to do his will; for in proportion as our endeavors are sincere and faithful, so shall we look up to him with confidence, joy, and hope. In this life, we are taught to regard it as that principle, which more than any other ennobles our nature. But in this life, the sentiment of devotion is obscured by our passions, our sorrows, our sins, our fears, and our superstitions. In the future, it will break forth as the sunshine when the clouds have past away ;

and we shall then, at last, feel what it is, to be surrounded by infinite goodness, to be the continual care of God, and to see mercy and love presenting themselves in visible forms in every part of the universe.

V. The future life of the good will be a life of continual progression and improvement. Our moral habits, and intellectual powers will be in constant exercise, and will therefore be constantly acquiring strength, and always bringing home to us the fruits of their labors. We are so constituted that a long continuance in the same state is irksome. In proportion as our minds are healthful and vigorous, we feel strong aspirations after something better and more excellent, than we have yet enjoyed or possessed. In this world, nature and religion teach us to be unsatisfied with our present attainments, and to regard a consciousness of improvement as essential to our happiness. In the future life, we may believe that the desire after higher excellence, which is thus im-

planted in us at our birth, and which our present discipline is intended to strengthen, will receive its full gratification. He who *has prepared for those that love him, what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived*, will, we may trust, confer upon the good all those powers, which they may become qualified to employ in his service. Our faculties of action, and our capacities of enjoyment, will be continually enlarging; and in our eternal progress, the time will come, when we shall have powers, and be engaged in occupations, of which we can now no more conceive, than an infant can form conceptions of the powers and occupations of the highest and most intellectual of mankind. Imagination may rest upon the scenes that are immediately to succeed this life, and make us in some degree familiar with their character. But in exploring the secrets of futurity, she cannot follow where reason leads the way; from all that lies in the remoter distance, she turns

away dazzled, and repelled, discerning nothing but an interminable expanse of light and glory.

These which we have been considering, will, we may rationally believe, be among the principal sources of enjoyment to the good in the future life. There may be others of a different character, concerning which we cannot form conclusions with any confidence. The certainty of the future life, of its joys and of its sufferings, is a truth which we should render familiar by frequent contemplation, and under the influence of which our whole characters ought to be formed. If we may rely at all upon the deductions of reason; if the voice of nature be not uttering falsehood; if the religion of joy and hope be not an imposture; if heaven and earth have not conspired to deceive us; and all around us be not a dream and a delusion; then it is certain that we have not risen into existence to pass rapidly through this short life, without purpose or sat-

isfaction, and then to sink into nothing again. Our destiny is of a far different and far higher character. 'This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.'

There are tendencies in our nature to which if we yield, we may become engrossed by the objects immediately before us ; we may estimate them out of all proportion to their relative value ; and the most important things future may seem to us shadowy and unreal ; as by him whose eye should have been always limited to some narrow circle, the mountains and cities in the distant horizon might be confounded with the clouds. But to yield to these tendencies is to be miserable ; commonly in this life, certainly in the other. What is to come, will come, whether or not we expect it or are prepared for it. The far-sighted wisdom which regards the whole of our existence, is the only guide which will not soon lead us from the path of happiness ; and

the conduct, which best secures our future good, is far more nearly allied to that which affords most present enjoyment, than our follies or our passions would suffer us to believe.

We have seen in what the happiness of the future life consists. Rich and glorious as is the prospect, it is still a prospect of such happiness as cannot be felt, unless we have prepared ourselves for its enjoyment. This preparation is the business of life; it is the purpose for which we are placed in this world. It consists in the faithful discharge of all our duties; in the improvement of our intellectual faculties, and our moral sensibility; in enlightening our minds by the study of our religion; in repressing our sensual appetites; in subduing our bad passions; in virtuous self-denial; in purity and temperance; in honesty and justice; in cultivating our social affections; in forming habits of benevolence; in regarding the happiness of others in all our conduct; in habitually considering how we may best

employ our faculties, and our means of usefulness, for the good of our friends and our fellow-men ; in viewing the common interest as our own ; in constantly regarding ourselves as the children and the creatures of God ; in looking up to him with resignation, gratitude, love, and reverence ; and in making his will the rule of all conduct. Superstition and fanaticism may fancy that they have discovered some easier path to heaven, than that of a good life. It is a wretched, and most pitiable delusion. There is no other, and there can be none easier. We may entertain, likewise, very false notions of the nature of repentance. Repentance is something much more than mere sorrow for past sins. Mere sorrow for past sins, considered by itself, is without value or efficacy. True repentance is a change of character from bad to good. The sensualist must become pure and temperate ; the selfish man must become generous and disinterested ; the angry and malignant must become gentle

and benevolent ; the profane must become serious and devout. But changes of this sort are not, in the common course of events, to be effected in a day, or a month, or a year ; far less in the few last days of a misspent life. No, it is impossible to form an unnatural union between vice and happiness. If we would attain the blessedness of heaven we must pay the price of the purchase ; we must become the servants of that master whose service is perfect freedom. It is by patient perseverance in well doing, that we may attain to glory, honor, and immortality.

By Andrews Norton.

THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED.

Region of life and light !
Land of the good whose earthly toils are o'er !
Nor frost nor heat may blight
Thy vernal beauty, fertile shore,
Yielding thy blessed fruits for evermore !

There, without crook or sling,
Walks the good shepherd ; blossoms white and red
Round his meek temples cling ;
And, to sweet pastures led,
His own loved flock beneath his eye is fed.

He guides, and near him they
Follow delighted, for he makes them go
Where dwells eternal May,
And heavenly roses blow,
Deathless, and gathered but again to grow.

He leads them to the height
Named of the infinite and long-sought Good,
And fountains of delight ;
And where his feet have stood
Springs up, along the way, their tender food.

And when, in the mid skies,
The climbing sun has reached his highest bound,
Reposing as he lies,
With all his flock around,
He witches the still air with numerous sound.

From his sweet lute flow forth
Immortal harmonies, of power to still
All passions born of earth,
And draw the ardent will
Its destiny of goodness to fulfill.

Might but a little part,
A wandering breath of that high melody,
Descend into my heart,
And change it till it be
Transformed and swallowed up, oh love ! in thee.

Ah ! then my soul should know,
Beloved ! where thou liest at noon of day,
And from this place of wo
Released, should take its way
To mingle with thy flock and never stray.

LIGHT OF IMMORTALITY

The earth, all light and loveliness, in summer's golden
hours,
Smiles, in her bridal vesture clad, and crowned with
festal flowers,
So radiantly beautiful, so like to heaven above,
We scarce can deem more fair that world of perfect
bliss and love.

Is this a shadow faint and dim, of that which is to
come ?
What shall the unveiled glories be of our celestial
home,
Where waves the glorious tree of life, where streams
of bliss gush free,
And all is glowing in the light of immortality !

To see again the home of youth, when weary years
have past,

Serenely bright, as when we turned and looked upon
it last ;
To hear the voice of love, to meet the rapturous embrace,
To gaze through tears of gladness, on each dear familiar face—

Oh ! this indeed is joy, though here, we meet again
to part.
But what transporting bliss awaits the pure and faithful heart,
Where it shall find the loved and lost, those who have
gone before,
Where every tear is wiped away, where partings come
no more !

When on Devotion's seraph wings, the spirit soars
above,
And feels thy presence, Father ! Friend ! God of
eternal love !
Joys of the Earth ! ye fade away before that living
ray,
Which gives to the rapt soul a glimpse of pure and
perfect day—

A gleam of heaven's own light—though now its brightness scarce appears,
Through the dim shadows, which are spread around
this vale of tears ;
But thine unclouded smile, O God ! fills that all glorious place,
Where we shall know as we are known, and see thee
face to face.

They need no sun, no moon. Those who have made
The circles of beloved homes below,
Will have their gathering there ; where never shade
Shall darken o'er affection's hallowed glow ;
Where not one link shall from its chain be reft,
Or vacant place be left.

The weary mortal's craving for his rest,
Which marks the circuit of his numbered hours,
Is like the small bird's yearning for his nest,—
The nightly closing of the short-lived flowers ;
But the immortals their resemblance keep,
To him who cannot sleep.

SOCIETY OF THE BLESSED.

The scriptures represent Heaven as a state of blessed society. A multitude, a numerous assembly, are represented, as sharing together the same felicity and honor. Without society, it is impossible for man to be happy. Place him in a region, where he was surrounded with every pleasure; yet there, if he found himself a solitary individual, he would pine and languish. They are not merely our wants, and our mutual dependence, but our native instincts, also, which impel us to associate together. The intercourse, which we here maintain with our fellows, is a source of our chief enjoyments. But, alas! how much are these allayed by a variety of disagreeable circumstances, that enter into all our connections! sometimes we suffer from the distresses

of those whom we love ; and sometimes from their vices or frailties. Where friendship is cordial, it is exposed to the wounds of painful sympathy, and to the anguish of violent separation. Where it is so cool, as not to occasion sympathetic pains, it is never productive of much pleasure. The ordinary commerce of the world consists in a circulation of frivolous intercourse, in which the heart has no concern. It is generally insipid, and often soured by the slightest difference in humor, or opposition of interest. We fly to company, in order to be relieved from wearisome correspondence with ourselves : and the vexations, which we meet with in society, drive us back again into solitude. Even among the virtuous, dissensions arise : and disagreement in opinion too often produces alienation of heart. We form few connections, where somewhat does not occur to disappoint our hopes. The beginnings are often pleasing. We flatter ourselves with having found those, who will never give us

any disgust. But weaknesses are too soon discovered. Suspicions arise, and love waxes cold. We are jealous of one another, and accustomed to live in disguise. A studied civility assumes the name, without the pleasure, of friendship: and secret animosity and envy are often concealed under the caresses of dissembled affection.

Hence the pleasure of earthly society, like all our other pleasures, is extremely imperfect; and can give us a very faint conception of the joy, that must arise from the society of perfect spirits in a happier world. Here, it is with difficulty that we can select, from the corrupted crowd, a few with whom we wish to associate in strict union. There, are assembled all the wise, the holy, and the just, who ever existed in the universe of God—without any distress, to trouble their mutual bliss, or any source of disagreement, to interrupt their perpetual harmony. Artifice and concealment are unknown there. There, no competitors

struggle ; no factions contend ; no rivals supplant each other. The voice of discord never rises, the whisper of suspicion never circulates, among those innocent and benevolent spirits. Each, happy in himself, participates in the happiness of all the rest ; and by reciprocal communications of love and friendship, at once receives from, and adds to, the sum of general felicity. Renew the memory of the most affectionate friends, with whom you were blest in any period of your life. Divest them of all those infirmities, which adhere to the human character. Recall the most pleasing and tender moments, which you ever enjoyed in their society : and the remembrance of those sensations may assist you in conceiving that felicity, which is possessed by the saints above. The happiness of brethren dwelling together in unity is, with great justice and beauty, compared by the psalmist to such things as are most refreshing to the heart of man—to the fragrancy of the richest odors—

and to the reviving influence of soft ethereal dews.

Heaven is not only a blessed but a numerous society. It is called a multitude, a great multitude, a great multitude which no man could number. These expressions convey the most enlarged views of the kingdom of glory. Dismay not yourselves with the apprehension of heaven being a confined and almost inaccessible region, into which it is barely possible for a small handful to gain admission, after making their escape from the general wreck of the human race. In my Father's house, said our Savior, there are many mansions. That city of the living God, towards which you profess to bend your course, is prepared for the reception of citizens innumerable. It already abounds with inhabitants: and more and more shall be added to it, until the end of time. Whatever difficulties there are in the way which leads to it, they have been often surmounted. The path, though narrow, is

neither impassable, nor untrodden. Though the gate stands not so wide as that which opens into hell, yet through the narrow gate multitudes have entered and been crowned.

It is much to be lamented, that, among all denominations of Christians, the uncharitable spirit has prevailed, of unwarrantably circumscribing the terms of divine grace within a narrow circle of their own drawing. The one half of the Christian world has often doomed the other, without mercy, to eternal perdition. Without the pale of that church to which each sect belongs, they seem to hold it impossible for salvation to be attained. But is this the genuine spirit of the gospel? Can a Christian believe the effects of the sufferings of Christ to be no greater than these? For this did the Son of God descend from the highest heavens, and pour out his soul unto the death, that only a few, who adopt the same modes of expression, and join in the same forms of worship with us, might be brought to

the kingdom of heaven? Is this all the deliverance he has wrought upon the earth? Surely, the Scripture has given us full ground to conclude, that the trophies of our Redeemer's grace, shall correspond to the greatness of his power. The Captain of our salvation shall bring many sons with himself to glory. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see his seed : he shall justify many. Men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed.

For our farther encouragement, let us observe, that the heavenly society is represented as being gathered out of all the varieties of the human race. This is intimated by the remarkable expressions of a multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues ; as if designed on purpose to correct our narrow notions of the extent and power of divine grace. They, whom distant seas and regions now divide, whose languages and manners are at

present strange to one another, shall then mingle in the same assembly. No situation is so remote, and no station so unfavorable, as to preclude access to the heavenly felicity. A road is open by the Divine Spirit to those blissful habitations, from all corners of the earth, and from all conditions of human life ; from the peopled city, and from the solitary desert ; from the cottages of the poor, and from the palaces of kings ; from the dwellings of ignorance and simplicity ; and from the regions of science and improvement. They shall come, says our blessed Lord himself, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.

Such discoveries serve both to enlarge our conceptions of the extent of the divine goodness, and to remove those fears which are ready to rise from particular situations in life. Were you permitted to draw aside the veil, and to view that diversified assembly of the

blessed, who surround the throne, you would behold among them numbers who have overcome the same difficulties which encounter you, and which you dread as insuperable. You would behold there, the uninstructed, with whom an upright intention supplied the place of knowledge ; the feeble, whom divine grace had strengthened ; and the misled, whom it had brought back into the right path. You would behold the young, who had surmounted the allurements of youthful pleasure ; and the old, who had borne the distresses of age with undecayed constancy ; many, whom want could not tempt to dishonesty ; many, whom riches did not seduce into pride or impiety ; many, who, in the most difficult and ensnaring circumstances, in the midst of camps, and armies, and corrupted courts, had preserved unsullied integrity. In a word, from all kindreds and people, that is, from all ranks of life, and all tribes of men, even from among publicans and sinners, you would behold those whom

divine assistance had conducted to future glory. And is not the same assistance, in its full extent, offered also to us? Encompassed, while we run the Christian race, with this cloud of witnesses, who have finished their course with success—animated, while we fight the good fight, with the shouts of those who have overcome, and are crowned—shall despair enervate or deject our minds? From the happy multitude above, there issues a voice which ought to sound perpetually in the ear of faith: Be ye faithful unto the death, and ye shall receive the crown of life; be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might; be followers of us, who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises.

Consider the description, given of the happiness and glory of the heavenly society. They were beheld by the apostle standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. All that these palms and white robes import,

it is not given us now to understand. We know, that among all nations, they have been used as ensigns of joy and victory; and are undoubtedly employed here to represent that distinguished felicity and honor, to which human nature shall be then advanced. But we must be endowed with the faculties of the blessed, in order to comprehend their employments and pleasures; and therefore on this part of the subject I shall not attempt to enlarge. The silence of humble and respectful hope better becomes us, than the indulgence of those excursions of fancy, which degrade the subject they endeavor to exalt.

One circumstance only cannot fail to attract particular attention; that the blessed are described, as standing before the throne and before the Lamb; that is, enjoying the immediate presence of the great Creator, and of the merciful Redeemer of the world. The unhappy distance, at which we are now removed from God, is the source of all our woes.

Those territories, which we inhabit, are not his abode. They are regions of exile. They are the dwellings of a fallen race ; and are condemned to be invested with clouds and darkness. Here, God standeth afar off. In vain we often pursue his presence through his works, his ways, and his religious institutions. He is said to be a God that hideth himself. He dwelleth, as to us, in the secret place of thunder. He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth a thick cloud upon it. The manifestation of his presence shall be the signal for the renovation of all things. When that Sun of righteousness breaks forth from the cloud which now conceals him, sorrow, and sin, and every evil thing, shall fly away before the brightness of his face ; for neither guilt nor misery can remain where God dwells. As the rising of the sun transforms at once the face of nature, and converts the whole extent of space, over which his beams are spread, into a region of light ; so shall the divine pres-

ence, as soon as it is revealed, diffuse universal bliss over all who behold it. It imports fullness of joy, and pleasure for evermore. The inspired writer thus describes its effects: "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor pain; for the former things are passed away. He that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more. But the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water. God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

But, descending from this too sublime theme, let us turn our attention to a circumstance in the state of future happiness, more commensurate to our present conceptions, which is suggested by the commentary upon these words." And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes; and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And

he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation." This explanatory circumstance may relate particularly to the case of those primitive sufferers, who endured severe persecution in the cause of the gospel. But, in general, it presents this natural and beautiful view of the future felicity of good men, that it is their rest from the troubles and toils of life. For, to all, even to the happiest, human life is tribulation and conflict. No man is thoroughly at ease in his condition. Pursuits succeeding to pursuits, keep us in constant agitation : while frequent returns of disappointment break our plans, and oppress our spirits :—Fatigued by such a variety of toils, mankind have ever looked forward to rest as their favorite object. Throughout all their ranks, from the highest to the lowest, they are in perpetual chase of it ; and it perpetually flies before them. It is an object which here they are doomed always to seek, and never to enjoy.

The nature and laws of our present state admit not the gratification of this favorite wish. For, besides the necessity of trouble, in order to fulfill the purposes of discipline and improvement, our very happiness, such as it is in this world, requires a circulation of labors. Our enjoyment consists in pursuit, not in attainment. Attainment is, with us, for the most part, the grave of pleasure. Had we no object to excite fresh activity, and to impel us to new toils, human life would quickly stagnate in melancholy indolence. At the same time, the current of all our wishes tends to repose. Imaginary forms float incessantly before our view, of the happiness which is to be enjoyed in rest: and from this conflict between our wishes, on the one hand, and our actual situation on the other, arise much of the disquiet, and much of the infelicity, of human life. It is only in heaven that the tranquil repose, which on earth is no more than a pleasing phantom, shall be fully realized. There, re-

maineth at last a rest for the people of God—rest from the disturbance of passion, the vanity of pursuit, and the vexation of disappointment—rest from all the sins and sorrows of this miserable world—rest, which shall not be merely an indolent cessation from labor, but a full and satisfying enjoyment. Good men shall rest from their labors; and their works shall follow them. They have come out of great tribulation. They have fulfilled, with honor, their appointed course of trial. They have sat down in the seat of the Conqueror; and of past labors nothing remains but the pleasing review, and the happy fruits.

There is still to be considered, one very material circumstance, descriptive both of the character, and of the happiness, of those who enjoy the heavenly bliss. Not only have they come out of great tribulation, but, as the spirit of God adds, in explanation, they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Two things are here suggest-

ed ; the sanctity of the blessed, and the means by which it is attained.

First, Their sanctity or purity is emblematically described, by their being clothed in robes which are washed and made white. In order to qualify human nature for the enjoyment of such happiness as I have endeavored to describe, it must undergo a change so great, as to receive in Scripture the appellation of a new birth ; a change to which all the institutions of religion, and all the operations of grace, contribute in this life, but which is not completed till the next. In this sanctity, or regeneration, consists not only the necessary preparations for future felicity, but, which is not so commonly attended to, consists an essential part of that felicity itself.

But suppose sin to be banished from the world—suppose perfect purity and charity to descend from heaven, and to animate every human breast ;—and you would behold the present habitation of men changed into the

paradise of God. The undisturbed enjoyment of a holy mind, and of a blissful union with one another, would scarcely allow us to feel those external evils, of which we now so loudly complain. All nature would assume a different appearance around us. That golden age which was so long the subject of the philosopher's dream, and of the poet's song, would in fact take place. According to the beautiful language of ancient prophecy, springs would then rise in the desert, and rivers be opened in the thirsty land. The wilderness and the solitary place would be glad. The wolf would dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid. Judgment would dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. The desert would rejoice, and blossom as the rose. If such, even in this world, would be the effects of innocence and virtue completely restored, how much greater must they be in that new earth, and those new heavens, where rectitude of

nature shall be combined with every circumstance of external felicity? It is the present imperfect state of human virtue, that hinders us from conceiving fully the influence of righteousness upon happiness. The robes, in which the best men are now clothed, are sullied with so many stains, as to convey no adequate idea of the original beauty which belongs to the garb of righteousness. But when these stains shall be washed away, when these robes shall be made perfectly white and pure, a lustre will flow from them, of which we can, as yet, form no conception.

But how are the robes of the blessed thus washed? Whence is derived that spotless purity, in which they are arrayed? The Spirit of God hath answered us, from the blood of the Lamb; leading our thoughts to that high dispensation of mercy, to which the saints above owe their establishment, first in grace, and then in glory. From that blood which was shed for the remission of sins, flow

both the atonement of human guilt, and the regeneration of human nature. Human nature had fallen too low, to be capable of retrieving itself. It could not regain its primitive innocence, and still less was capable of raising itself so high in the scale of existence, as to mingle with angels. We had neither sufficient knowledge to discover, nor virtue to merit, nor ability to qualify ourselves for enjoying, celestial glory. Heaven must have been either covered from our view by perpetual darkness, or only beheld from afar as an inaccessible region, if Christ had not interposed, to open for us a new and living way within the veil. The obligation which his generous undertaking has conferred upon the human race, will tend highly to increase the felicity of the blessed. The sense of being distinguished by so illustrious a benefactor, and the corresponding returns of gratitude and love to him, form some of the most pleasing of those emotions, which shall continue to delight them through all eternity.

From those views of a state of future happiness, which have been suggested, various instructions, relating to life and practice, naturally arise. We are taught to rectify our notions of felicity; to look for it, not in what is external, but in what relates to the mind and heart—in good dispositions, and a purified soul—in unity and friendship with one another—and in the divine presence and favor. If such things form the principal articles of future bliss, they cannot but be essential to our happiness in the more early periods of existence: and he, who seeks his chief enjoyment from an opposite quarter, errs widely from the path which conducts to felicity.

We are farther taught whence to derive constancy and perseverance, amidst the present discouragements of a virtuous life. In this world, we often behold good men depressed, and the wicked prospering around us. Our best deeds meet with unjust returns from an ungrateful world. Sincerity is over-reached

by craft: and innocence falls a victim to power. But let us not on such occasions say within ourselves, that in vain we have cleansed our hearts, and washed our hands in innocence. Let us rest on the assurance, that these disorders extend not far in the kingdom of God. They affect only the first stage of existence. They relate to discipline and trial, which will soon be finished. In that permanent state, which is about to open, a new and better order of things shall arise. When dejected with the evils of life, let us look upward to that happy multitude, who have come out of great tribulation, and now stand before the throne. Until the day arrive, which shall join us to that blessed assembly, let us show ourselves worthy of the hope that is before us, by supporting, with a constant mind, the trials of our fidelity. Be patient ; stablish your hearts. The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

From the prospects thus afforded, we may likewise learn what the spirit is, which should

regulate our life. Sanctity of conduct, dignity of character, elevation of affections, become those who expect to mingle with angels, and spirits of just men made perfect. I mean not, that such prospects should carry away our whole attention from the present world, where, undoubtedly, lies the chief scene of human action, and human duty. But while we act as inhabitants of the earth, we ought, at the same time, so to remember our connection with a better world, as not to debase ourselves with what is mean, not to defile ourselves with what is impure, not to entangle ourselves among what is ensnaring, in the present state. Let neither its advantages elate, nor its disappointments deject us ; but with an equal spirit, with a mind full of immortality, let us pass through all the changes of this mortal life.

HOME OF THE BLEST.

Know ye the land, where no pain and no sorrow
Shall darken the brow, or bow down the head,
Where no grief of today, and no thought of tomorrow,
Shall reach the glad heart, and appall it with dread ?
Know ye the land of the spirit of peace,
Where the joys never lessen, the hymns never cease ;
Where the friends of our bosoms, here lost in the
tomb,
Shall meet us again, ever freed from its gloom ;
Where the hearts, now divided, united shall rest,
And be healed of their woes in the bowers of the blest ;
Where the tear shall not quench the bright beam of
the eye,
Where hopes, here destroyed, meet fruition on high,
And spirits with spirits in love only vie ;
Where the morn shall arise on the night of the grave,
And the arms that chastised be expanded to save ?
'T is the home of the just—'t is the region of truth,
Where the children shall dwell ever blooming in
youth ;

Oh ! dearer than aught to the sorrow-worn soul,
Are the dreams of that land, and the hopes of that
goal.

VISIONS OF THE FUTURE.

Yes, visions of his future rest
To man, the pilgrim, here are shown ;
Deep love, pure friendship, thrill his breast,
And hopes rush in of joys unknown.

Released from earth's dull round of cares,
The aspiring soul her vigor tries ;
Plumes her soiled pinions, and prepares
To soar amid etherial skies.

Around us float in changing light
The dazzling forms of distant years ;
And earth becomes a glorious sight,
Beyond which opening heaven appears.

HEAVEN.

Then never tear shall fall,
The heart shall ne'er be cold;
And life's rich tree shall teem for all
With fruit 'more golden far than gold.'

Then those we lost below
Once more we shall enfold ;
And there, with eyes undimm'd by woe,
The burning throne of God behold.

There the pure sun-bow glows
Unaided by the shower ;
No thorn attends the elysian rose,
No shadow marks the blissful hour.

There roll the streams of love,
Beyond death's wintry power ;
In light and song for aye they move
By many a blest immortal's bower.

PERMANENCY OF THE FUTURE LIFE.

A sacred veil conceals the mansions of glory. This earth on which we dwell is no more than an exterior region of the great kingdom of God. It is but an entrance, through which, after suitable preparation, we pass into the palace of an Almighty sovereign. Admitted there, we may hope to behold far greater objects than we can now behold; and to enjoy in perfection those pleasures which we here view from afar, and pursue in vain. Such degrees of pleasure are allowed us at present as our state admits. But a state of trial required that pains should be intermixed with our pleasures, and that infirmity and distress should often be felt. The remains of our fall appear every where in our condition. The ruins of human nature present themselves on all hands.

But "when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away." With the fall of the earthly house, all its rotten and corruptible materials shall disappear. "It is sown in corruption," says the apostle, speaking of the happy change made upon good men at the resurrection, "it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural, it is raised a spiritual body;—for this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality."

Besides the glory and perfection of the future state, the scriptures suggest its permanency. The house not made with hands is a house eternal in the heavens. The tabernacle which we now inhabit is every moment liable to fall: above is the fixed mansion, the seat of perpetual rest. Beyond doubt, the certain prospect of death renders every thing inconsiderable which we here possess. Every

enjoyment is saddened, when we think of its end approaching. We become sensible that we are always building on sand, never on a rock. Fluctuation and change characterize all that is around us ; and at the moment when our attachment to any persons or objects is become the strongest, they are beginning to slide away from our hold. But in the mansions above, alteration and decay are unknown. Every thing there continues in a steady course. No schemes are there begun and left unfinished ; no pleasing connections just formed, and then broken off. The treasures possessed there shall never be diminished ; the friends we enjoy there shall never die, and leave us to mourn. In those celestial regions, shines the sun that never sets ; the calm reigns, which is never disturbed ; the river of life flows with a stream, which is always unruffled in its course.

Such are the prospects, imperfectly as we can now conceive them, which are set forth

to good men in a future world. But how, it may be asked, shall we be satisfied that such prospects are not mere illusions with which our fancy flatters us. Upon what foundation rests this mighty edifice of hope, which the apostle rears up for the consolation of Christians, and of which he speaks so confidently as to say, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God?"

Let us take a view of the different kinds of evidence upon which our faith of a happy immortality is grounded.

We must observe, that the dissolution of the earthly tabernacle at death, affords no ground for thinking that the soul at the same time perishes, or is extinguished. I begin with this observation, because the strongest prejudices against the soul's immortality arise from what is sometimes found to happen at that period. The soul and the body are at present united with the closest sympathy.

When one suffers, the other is affected. Both seem to grow up together to the maturity of their powers ; and together both seem often to decay. Such a shock is apparently suffered by the soul at death, as at first view might lead us to suspect that it was sharing the same fate with the body. Notwithstanding this, there are clear proofs that the body and the soul, though at present closely connected by divine appointment with one another, are however, substances of different and dissimilar natures. Matter, of which the body is composed, is a substance altogether dead and passive, and cannot be put in motion without some external impulse. Whereas, the soul has within itself a principle of motion, activity, and life. Between the laws of matter and the action of thought, there is so little resemblance, or rather so much opposition, that mankind in general have agreed in holding the soul to be an immaterial substance ; that is, a substance the nature of which we cannot ex-

plain or define farther than that it is a substance quite distinct from matter. This being once admitted, it clearly follows, that since thought depends not on matter, from the dissolution of the material part we have no ground to infer the destruction of the thinking part of man. As long as by the ordination of the Creator these different substances remain united, there is no wonder that the one should suffer from the disorder or indisposition of the other.

It is so far from following that the soul must cease to act on the dissolution of the body, that it seems rather to follow, that it will then act in a more perfect manner. In its present habitation, it is plainly limited and confined in its operations. When it is let loose from that earthly house, it is brought forth into greater liberty. To illustrate this by an instance which may be conceived as analogous ; let us suppose a person shut up in an apartment, where he saw light only through some small

windows. If these windows were foul or dimmed, he would see less ; if they were altogether darkened, he could see none at all. But were he let out from his confinement into the open air, he would be so far from being deprived of sight, that though at first overpowered by a sudden glare, he would soon see around him much more completely than before. The senses are as so many windows or apertures, through which the soul at present exercises its powers of perception. If the senses are disordered the powers of the soul will be obstructed. But once separated from its earthly tenement, the soul will then exercise its powers without obstruction ; will act with greater liberty, and in a wider sphere. I admit this argument only goes as far as to show, that although the body perish, there remains with the soul a capacity for separate existence. Whether that existence shall be actually continued to it after death, must depend on the will of Him who gave it life, and

who certainly at his pleasure can take that life away. It is necessary, therefore, to inquire into what we have any reason to believe, may be the intention of our Creator concerning a future life.

I argue then, in the next place, that if the soul were to perish when the body dies, the state of man would be altogether unsuitable to the wisdom and perfection of the author of his being. Man would be the only creature that would seem to have been made in vain. All the other works of God are contrived to answer exactly the purposes for which they were made. They are either incapable of knowledge at all ; or, they know nothing higher than the state in which they are placed. Their powers are perfectly suited and adjusted to their condition. But it is not so with man. He has every appearance of being framed for something higher and greater than what he here attains. He sees the narrow bounds within which he is here confined ;

knows and laments all the imperfections of his present state. His thirst for knowledge, his desires of happiness, all stretch beyond his earthly station. He searches in vain for adequate objects to gratify him. His nature is perpetually tending and aspiring towards the enjoyment of some more complete felicity than this world can afford. In the midst of all his researches and aspirations, he is suddenly cut off. He is but of yesterday, and to-morrow is gone. Often in the entrance, often in the bloom of life, when he had just begun to act his part, and to expand his powers, darkness is made to cover him. Can we believe that when this period is come, all is finally over with the best and worthiest of mankind? Endowed with so noble an apparatus of rational powers, taught to form high views and enlarged desires, were they brought forth for no other purpose, than to breathe this gross and impure air for a short space, and then to be cut off from all existence? All his other

works, God hath made in weight, number, and measure ; the hand of the Almighty artificer every where appears. But on man, his chief work here below, he would, upon this supposition, appear to have bestowed no attention ; and after having erected a stately palace in this universe, framed with so much magnificence, and decorated with so much beauty, to have introduced man, in the guise of a neglected wanderer, to become its inhabitant.

Let us farther consider the confusion and promiscuous distribution of good and evil in this life. The enjoyments of the world, such as they are, are far from being always bestowed on the virtuous and the worthy. On the contrary, the bitterest portion is often their lot. In the midst of infirmities, diseases, and sorrows, they are left to drag their life, while ease and affluence are allowed the ungodly.—I must ask, if such an arrangement of things, owing to the ordination, or, at least, to the permission of Providence, be consonant to

any ideas we can form of the wisdom and goodness of a Supreme Ruler, on the supposition of there being no future state?—But as soon as the immortality of the soul, and a state of future retribution are established, all difficulties vanish; the mystery is unravelled; supreme wisdom, justice, and goodness are discovered to be only concealed for a little while behind the curtain. If that curtain were never to be withdrawn and immortality never to appear, the ways of God would be utterly inexplicable to man. We would be obliged to conclude that either a God did not exist; or, though he existed, that he was not possessed of such perfections as we now ascribe to him, if when a worthy and pious man had spent his whole life in virtuous deeds, and perhaps had died a martyr to the cause of religion and truth; he should, after long and severe sufferings, perish finally, unrewarded and forgotten; no attention shown to him by the Almighty; no building of God erected for

him ; no house eternal prepared in the heavens !

These reasonings are much strengthened by the belief that has ever prevailed among all mankind, of the soul's immortality. It is not an opinion that took its rise from the thin-spun speculation of some abstract philosophers. Never has any nation been discovered on the face of the earth so rude and barbarous, that in the midst of their wildest superstitions there was not cherished among them some expectations of a state after death, in which the virtuous were to enjoy happiness. So universal a consent in this belief, affords just ground to ascribe it to some innate principle implanted by God in the human breast. Had it no foundation in truth, we must suppose that the Creator found it necessary for the purposes of his government, to carry on a principle of universal deception among his rational subjects. Many of the strongest passions of our nature are made to have a clear reference to a future ex-

istence of the soul. The love of fame, and the ardent concern which so often prevails about futurity, all allude to somewhat in which men suppose themselves to be personally concerned after death. The consciences both of the good and the bad, bear witness to a world that is to come. Seldom do men leave this world without some fears or hopes respecting it; some secret anticipations and presages of what is hereafter to befall them.

But though the reasonings which have been adduced to prove the immortality of the soul and a future state, are certainly of great weight, yet reasonings still they are, and no more, and in every human reasoning, suspicions may arise of some fallacy or error. In a point so momentous to us, as our existence after death, we never could, with absolute certainty and full satisfaction, have rested on any evidence except what was confirmed by the declaration of God himself. For many and high blessings we are indebted to the

Christian revelation ; for none more than for its having brought life and immortality to light. The revelations made by God to the world in early ages, gave the first openings to this great article of faith and hope. In future periods the light dawned more and more ; but it was not until the Sun of righteousness arose by the appearance of Christ on earth, that the great discovery was completed. Then, indeed, were made known the city of the living God, the new Jerusalem above, the mansions prepared for the spirits of just men made perfect. Nor was a state of future felicity only proclaimed by Christ and his apostles to good men, but was represented as purchased for them by the death of their Redeemer. "I give," he was authorized to say, "unto my sheep eternal life. In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." Accordingly, he lay down in the grave; rose as the first fruits of them that slept; and ascending into heaven, entered there within

the veil, as the forerunner of his followers, to assure them of all being friendly and well disposed towards them in those upper regions. All therefore who live and die in the faith and obedience of Jesus, are entitled to say with the apostle, *we know*; not only we hope and we reason, but “we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

THE CHARACTER UNCHANGED BY DEATH.

The connections which the society of the world renders necessary may cease ; but the cast they have given to the character, the feelings they have excited, the affections they have formed, the habits they have produced, will continue ; and the objects on which the heart now so fondly rests, may be the objects of a purer and more exalted interest when the frailties of nature cease, and they are met among the angels of God.

The cultivation of particular affections, of the affections arising from the parental, filial, and conjugal relations, is not only the dictate of nature, but the command of duty. And is the culture of this part of our character to be entirely useless hereafter ? Are none of the

feelings, which nature and Christianity have taught us to nourish, to remain? What is to destroy these affections, what to turn them to coldness and indifference? Not surely a mere passage through the grave; not our admission to the kingdom of joy and love. When corruption is turned to incorruption, is the heart to be laid waste? are the best and purest of our social affections to be lost? and, with the weaknesses of mortality, much which now ennobles and blesses our nature, to be annihilated for ever? We think of a future state as too different in its nature from the present. Exalted, glorious, and happy indeed it is, beyond conception; exempt from frailty, freed for ever from sorrow, from trial, and from sin; but the sources of its happiness must be adapted to our nature, and will be such in kind as those which the righteous find on earth. Death does not miraculously change our characters. It only changes the mode of our existence, and introduces us to a holier and hap-

pier world ; and we enter it with the dispositions which we have nourished, and the capacities of enjoyment which our care has improved. And as God has created us social beings, as much of our highest and purest delight arises from the intercourses of friendship on earth, and as the culture of our social feelings is so important a part of our present duty and of our preparation for heaven ; it is surely most reasonable to believe that an exalted communion with perfected spirits will be a source of happiness hereafter, and that the friends who have been dear to us on the earth, will, if we and they are worthy, be again restored to our knowledge and affection.

On such a subject as this, we cannot expect a clear and satisfactory light from the language of scripture. But yet it seems, that on no subject connected with the happiness of heaven are its intimations more distinct, than where it teaches us to anticipate the knowl-

edge and union of good men in heaven ; and there surely is no view which reason more approves, or which seems more consonant with the general spirit of the gospel, and with the benevolence of God. But even were it not so ; were the intimations of scripture altogether indistinct, or were they entirely wanting ; yet the very teachings of nature, the fervent anticipations of our own hearts, would alone be sufficient to sanction the belief. Is not the voice of nature within us the voice of God ? And can we believe that a hope which every human being cannot but cherish, an ardent desire so inseparably interwoven with every conception of immortality, a feeling of assurance which we recognise in every mode of religion, in the hope of the savage as well as in the aspirations of the Christian :—can we believe, that this hope would be so universal, so deep rooted in nature, if it were never to be fulfilled ; if it were intended to be forever crushed and disappointed ; if God de-

signs not, in some better state of existence, to restore to us the friends whom in wisdom and mercy he has taken away?

If, then, we look forward to a knowledge and union with one another hereafter, what influence should it have on our present feelings and conduct?

This thought should lead us to form only virtuous friendships, for these only will endure. Intimacies with the vicious, if they terminate not with life, can be renewed only to aggravate the burden of anguish and remorse. Our best earthly friends have their frailties, and often may irritate or wound us. Ought we not now cheerfully to bear with them, while we look forward to a day when all weaknesses shall be past, and we shall know them only as purified and perfected spirits? If we desire to meet them again, with what care and zeal should we labor for their improvement, with what earnestness should we watch over their characters, and with what fidelity counsel, re-

prove, and warn them. Our influence may be one of the greatest means of nourishing their virtue and piety ; and how will it add to our happiness to receive hereafter the expressions of their gratitude, whom our example or our exertions have helped to rescue from sin and prepare for heaven.

This subject is also full of consolation, and of encouragement to duty. If we weep for the friends who have departed and who sleep in Jesus, we cannot sorrow without hope. They have only passed to their reward a little before us, and soon shall we meet them again. Though they have left us, we are not forgotten by them, nor is their interest in us destroyed. If, then, we have friends now in heaven ; if our thoughts can recur to a parent on whom our infant eyes had hardly rested, or whose form has now faded from the remembrance of our youth ; if there be a friend there, once dear to us as our own souls, and who left us widowed and desolate ; if there

be a child there, on whom all our earthly hopes had rested, whose steps to the grave we had watched with unutterable anguish, and whose departure bowed us to the dust ; if we desire to meet them again, let us strive to imitate their virtues, and follow the bright path of glory by which they have ascended. Let us cherish the sacred remembrance. Let us feel that now there is a circle which connects us with a better world, and often meditate on what they are, and what we may hereafter be.

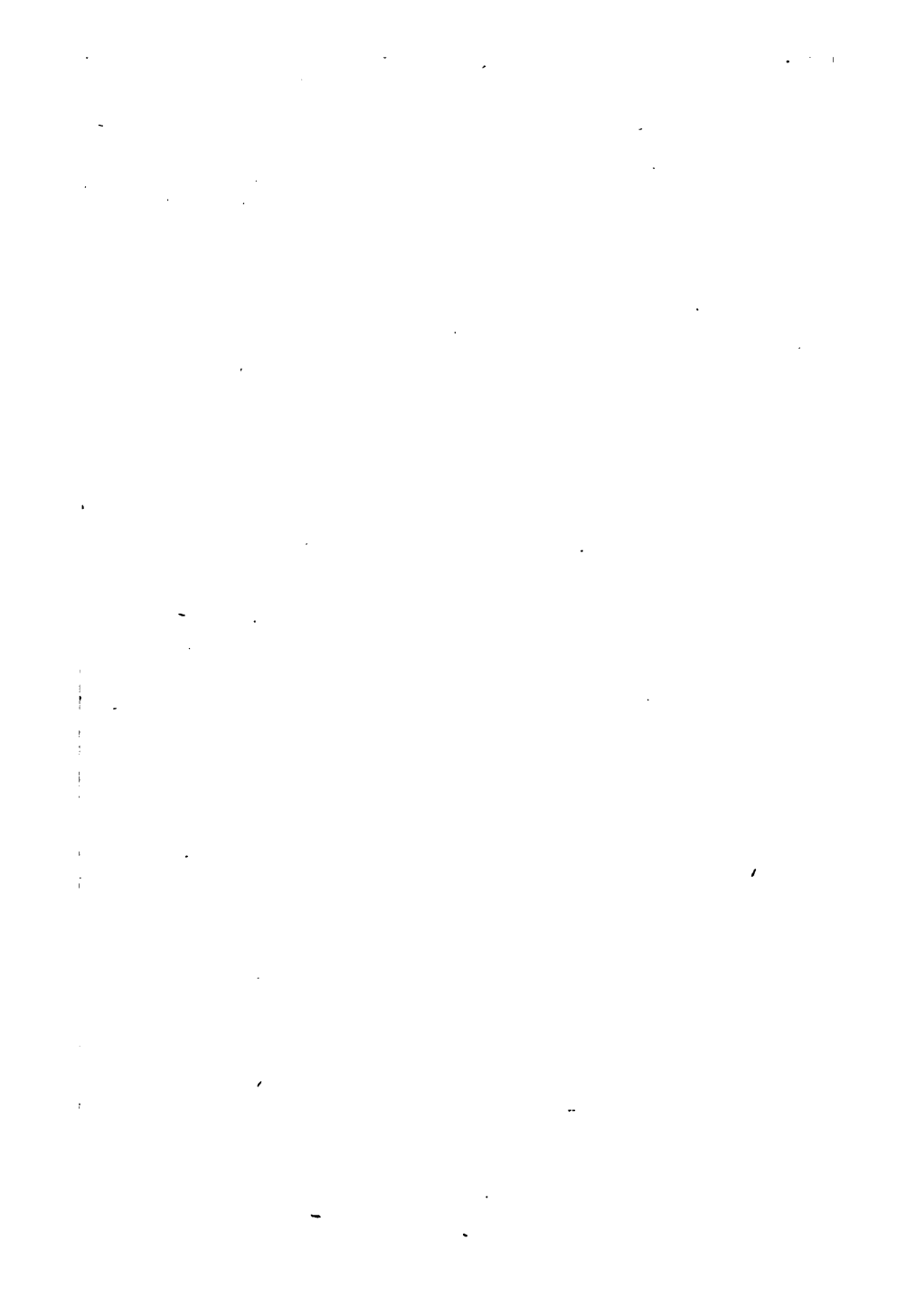
We are all passing fast away ; one friend sinks after another, and soon we too must follow them. And what will prepare us to depart ? Nothing but the faithful performance of duty, nothing but earnest and unfailing efforts to obtain the Christian character. God grant, that we may make these efforts ! that in the day of the Lord we may all appear with joy ! and that in the world which is opening to receive us, none

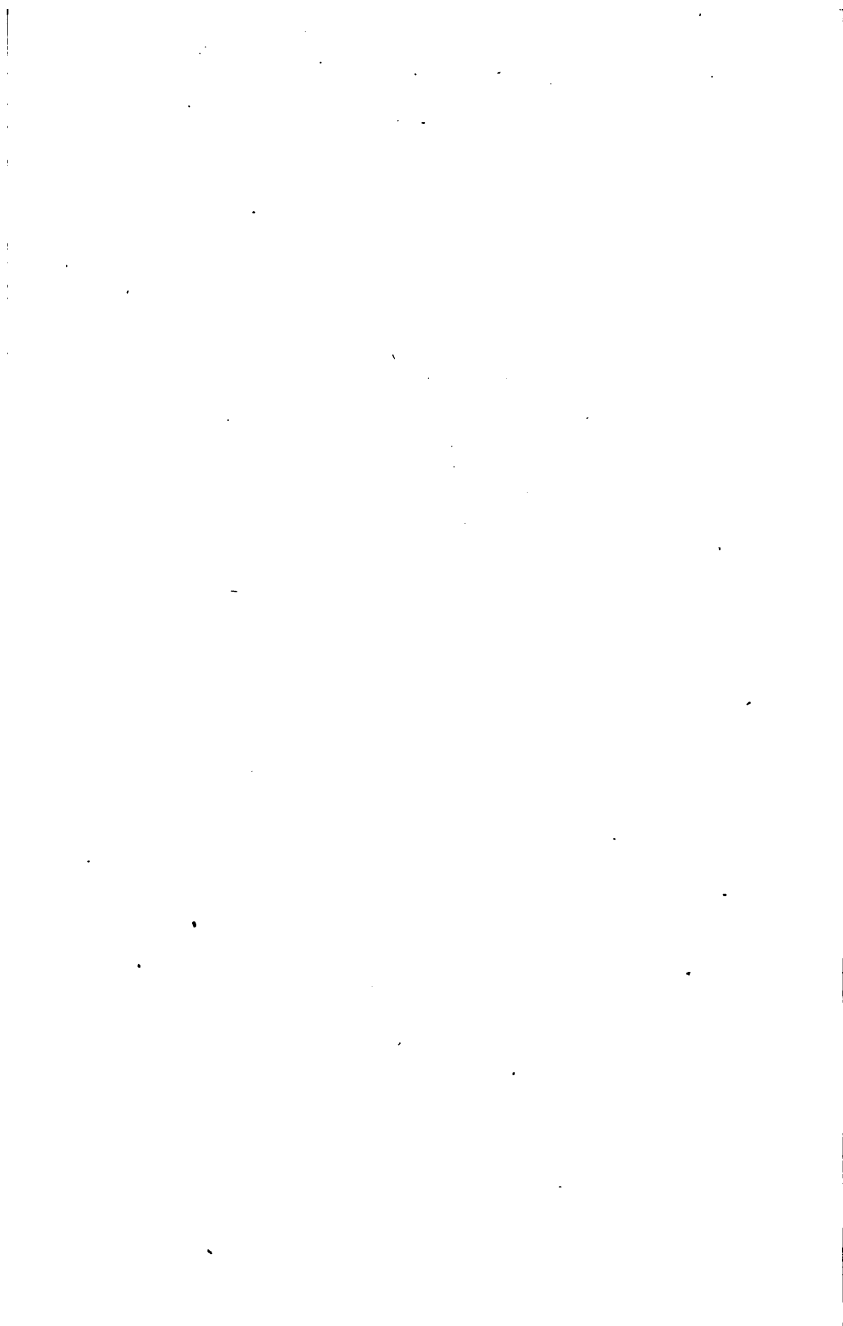
may be wanting, whom the bonds of nature,
or the endearments of affection, have made
near to us on earth!

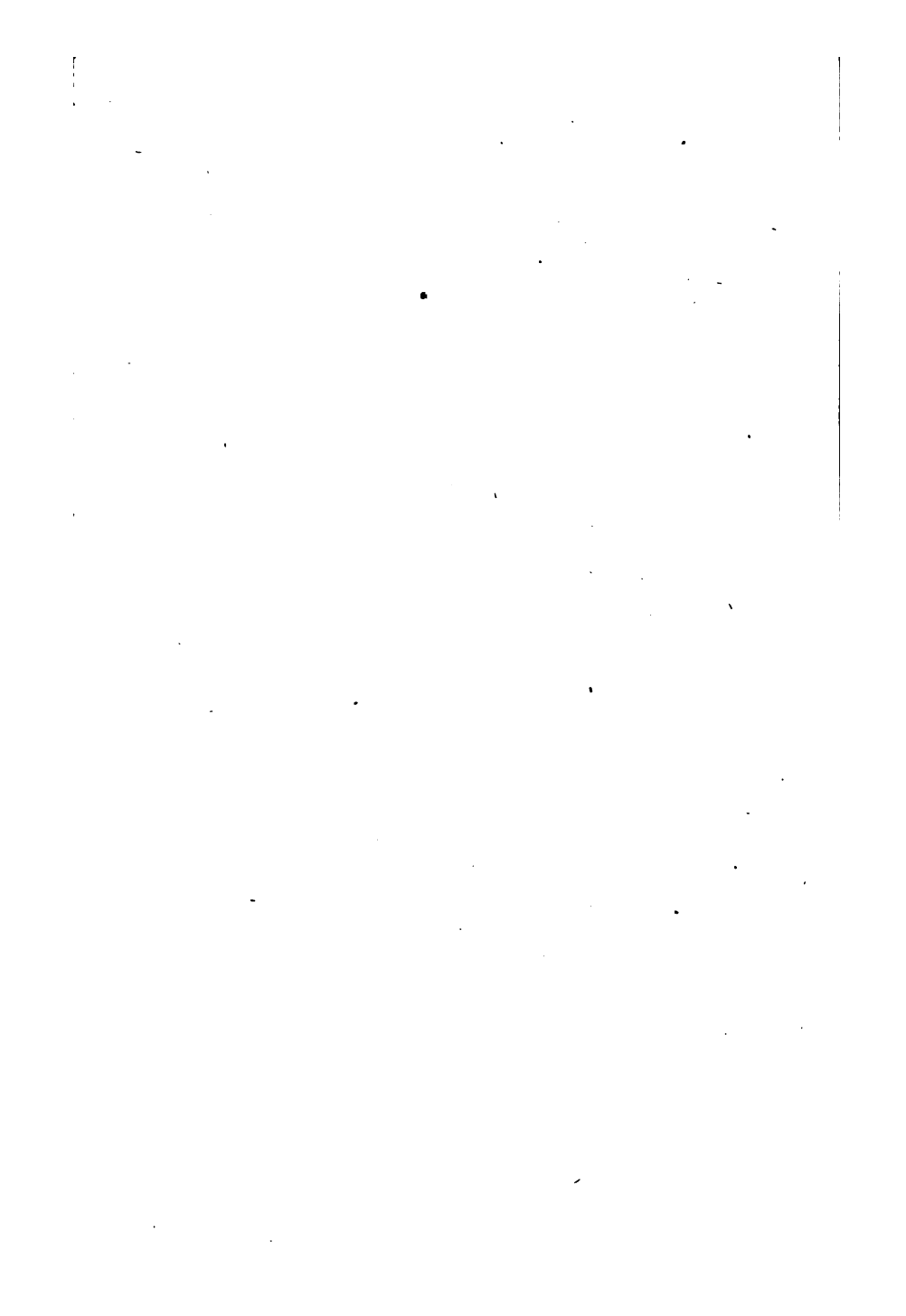
We cannot deem th' *All Merciful* would give
A love undimmed, unquenchable, unspent,
Through a long life within the heart to live,
If for some future good it were not meant.
He gave its objects, he will them restore,
Retouched, and fitted to decline no more.

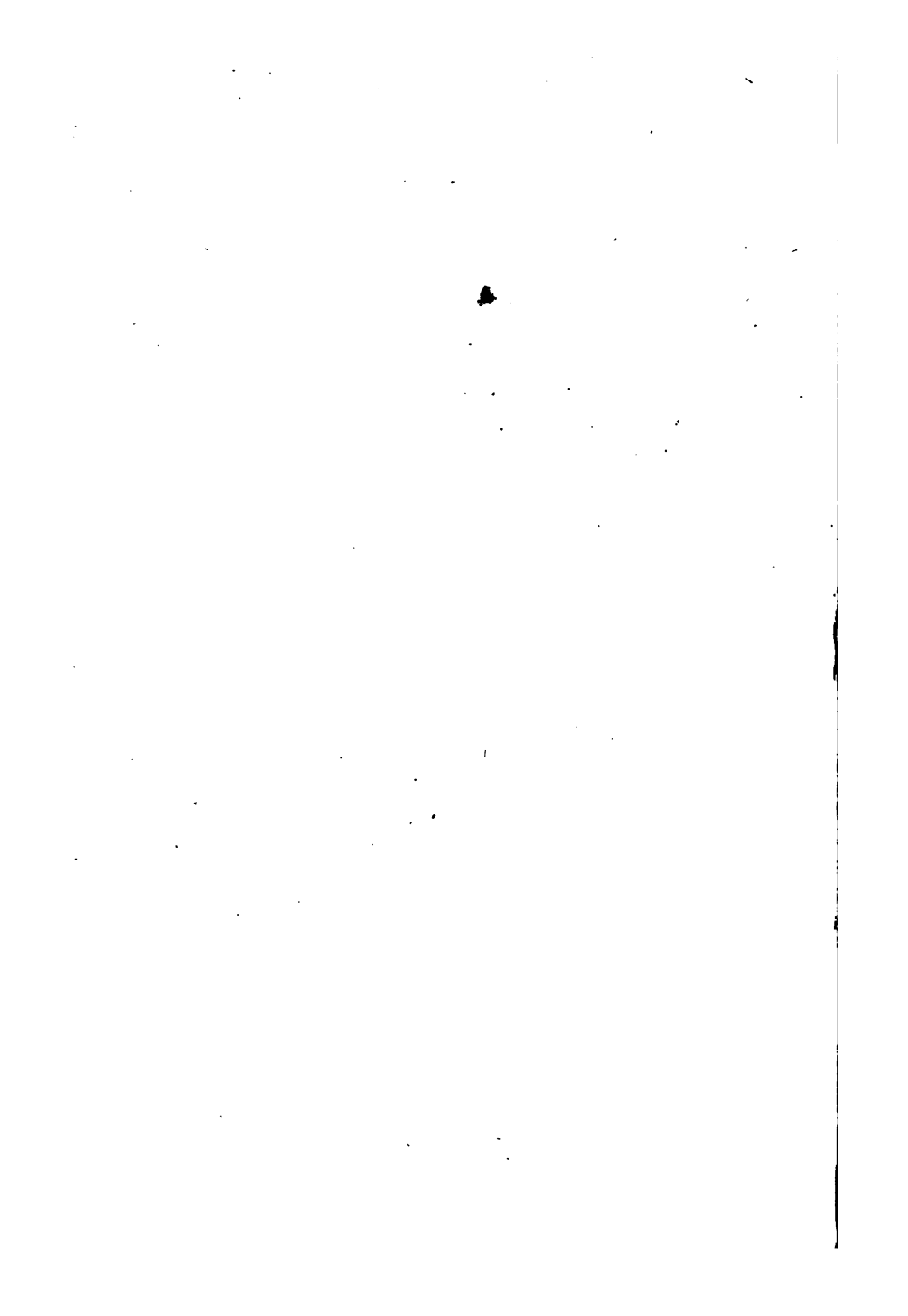
Then, memory, hail! the withered heart grows warm
With thee the path of life to traverse back ;
As each familiar face and well-known form
Glideth in light upon the shadowy track,
Count up the lost, and as their sum will be
The riches of the spirit's treasury.

THE END.













OCT 31 1891

